

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. Embassy Budapest, Hungary
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title:	U.S. Ambassador’s Independent Media Support (AIMS) Fund
Funding Opportunity Number:	PDS-BUD-FY23-AEECA001
Deadline for Applications:	June 30, 2023 no later than 11:59 p.m. (CET)
Assistance Listing Number:	19.900 AEECA
Total Amount Available:	\$500,000 - subject to availability of funds

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy in Budapest, Hungary of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications to carry out a program to provide support to Hungarian independent media outlets and civil society organizations actively advancing media freedom in Hungary. Please follow all instructions below.

Region: Hungary

Program Objectives:

Activities under this cooperative agreement will support the independent media landscape in Hungary by enabling independent media and/or civil society organizations to promote high-quality journalism and the long-term viability of independent media outlets and journalists.

The implementing partner will manage funds that will be disbursed to sub-recipients for either pre-planned expenditures or “rapid response funds” for unforeseen expenditures that generally fall within the following funding categories:

- Travel for journalists, researchers, technicians, editorial staff, or other essential personnel for the purposes of reporting, conducting interviews, conducting research, or other activities that contribute to independent journalistic activities.
- Transportation, lodging, and meals/incidental expenses for rural journalists to travel to Budapest for media training, conferences, professional development, consultations, and reporting activities.
- Short-term professional development courses for journalists (non-degree programs) and associated travel costs.
- Programmatic and administrative costs associated with internships, fellowships, or other training and development programs for emerging journalists or technical staff.
- Fees to access to research databases, archives, or other online resources that advance independent journalistic reporting.

- Legal or administrative fees related to access to information, legal proceedings, or other administrative processes essential to operations.
- Logistical expenditures related to journalistic reporting and research (translations, transcriptions, audio/video production, equipment rental, venue rental, etc.).
- Event production costs for journalist trainings, media literacy programming, public information campaigns, public exhibitions, etc.
- Publication of educational materials (including translation of materials into Hungarian)
- Costs for licensing, subscription, marketing, financial management, or consulting services, software, or databases.
- Support for digital infrastructure, to include web design, online hosting, web optimization, development of mobile applications, community managers, etc.
- Conduct of market analysis, public opinion polling, or other research related to the Hungarian media landscape, media consumption trends.
- Other similar activities approved by the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

The implementing partner must establish a clear, efficient, transparent, publicly available procedure for prospective sub-recipients to apply for financial support under this award.

Participants and Audiences:

The implementing partner must:

- Be based in Hungary (preferred) or the Central Europe region, or have a substantial local presence which allows for hands-on program management and monitoring/evaluation activities.
- Have the capacity to expeditiously disburse funds to sub-recipients (beneficiaries) in compliance with U.S., Hungarian, and EU regulations.
- Regularly consult with the U.S. Embassy in Budapest on funding decisions, program activities, monitoring and evaluation, and other grant activities.

Sub-recipients must fall into one of the following categories:

- Independent media outlets with operations in Hungary.
- Independent civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations conducting activities that advance media freedom in Hungary.
- Independent educational institutions or entities providing academic and/or professional development courses or other developmental resources to students, journalists, or others in the media field.

For programming purposes, an independent organization is defined as one which is not directly or indirectly affiliated with or funded by a political party, partisan organization, or political candidate. Final determination of an organization's status as an independent entity shall be made by the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period:	12 months with the possibility for extension
Number of awards anticipated:	1-3 awards
Award amounts:	Awards may range from a minimum of \$75,000 to a maximum of \$500,000
Total available funding:	\$500,000 – subject to availability of funds
Type of Funding:	FY2023 Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) Funds administered by the Public Diplomacy Section of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest
Anticipated program start date:	September 1, 2023

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative Agreement. Substantial involvement of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest will include approval of all sub-recipients (beneficiaries), program activities, funding timelines, and monitoring/evaluation oversight.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 12 months, but depending on program needs extension is possible.

The Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

Hungarian, U.S., or other foreign entities, including:

- Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- Public and private educational institutions
- Public international organizations and governmental institutions

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for more information.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required are available at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Applicants must submit all application materials directly to the following email:

BudapestGrants@state.gov

In the subject of their email applicants must include the Funding Opportunity Number and the name of the applying organization (PDS-BUD-FY23-AEECA001;name of organization...)

After submission deadline, applicants will receive an email confirming their application has been received.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered

The following documents are **required** in PDF format. Applications missing any components below may be returned to the applicant without consideration.

1. Mandatory application forms

- **SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations)**
- **SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)**
- **SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs)** (SF-424B is required only for organizations not registered in SAM.gov)

2. Summary Page: Cover sheet stating the applicant name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, organization's UEI number, expiration date of the SAM.gov registration, and brief purpose of the program.

3. Proposal (10 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand the precise nature of the grant activities. Applicants may use their own proposal format, but it must include all the items below at a minimum.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed.
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The "goals" describe what the program is intended to achieve. The "objectives" refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Proposed Program Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the time-frame of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant's plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate file to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions below for further information.

5. Attachments:

- 1-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner

- If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file.
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities

3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx>

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant's identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO (G. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts) at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than June 30, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. (CET).

5. Funding Restrictions

All program activities must occur within Hungary or in support of activities based in Hungary.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to BudapestGrants@state.gov.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Understanding of the Hungarian Media Landscape – 25 points: The applicant demonstrates appropriate knowledge of the Hungarian media landscape, has an established network of potential program partners, and has the necessary background and experience to implement the required program activities.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 25 points: The organization has expertise in supporting media and/or civil society organizations and has the internal controls in place to manage federal funds. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.

Program & Process Management – 25 points: The organization identifies a clear and efficient mechanism through which to solicit and award funding to sub-recipients in accordance with U.S., Hungarian, and EU regulations.

Budget – 10 points: The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Monitoring and evaluation plan – 15 points: Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators, and shows how and when those will be measured.

2. Review and Selection Process

A review committee will evaluate all eligible applications.

3. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

i. The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

ii. An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

iii. The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be disbursed to the implementing partner in tranches upon submission of form SF-270 based on predefined performance benchmarks.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

These include:

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
 - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
 - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty (E.O. 13798) and Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
 - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
 - Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit quarterly financial reports and program reports. The final quarterly report will serve as the final progress and final financial reports.

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact:

BudapestGrants@state.gov

In the email subject please indicate the Funding Opportunity Number: PDS-BUD-FY23-AEECA001

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.